

SPEECH

OF

JACOB THOMPSON, OF MISSISSIPPI,

ON

THE CIVIL AND DIPLOMATIC BILL,

AND THE

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JULY 21, 1848.

Mr. THOMPSON, of Mississippi, said: It is apparent to every member on this floor that the civil and diplomatic bill must pass and become a law before this session adjourns. But the position in which we are now placed is unprecedented, and will astound the country. The majority of this House have inserted into this bill provisions which render it impossible for a large minority to vote for its passage. But that majority having thus amended the bill and made it obnoxious, refuse to pass the bill known to be absolutely necessary to the well being, if not the very existence, of the Government. An effort seems to be made to force members to violate their conscience, or leave the public officers without support. The whole civil list is to be starved out, because honorable Representatives will not sustain an appropriation to remove obstructions in the Savannah river, in violation of their well known and declared opinions. For one, I shall remain immovable, be the consequences what they may. I have an abiding confidence in the good sense of the people to comprehend and appreciate this movement.

I hope, if the bill passes in its present shape, the President will withhold his signature. I hope he is not to be moved from his principles by the fear of starvation. I believe that he will not acquiesce, under duress, in the adoption of a measure which would not receive his sanction when left free to exercise the discretion which has been secured to him by the Constitution. I believe in the President's firmness. He has given the country too many evidences of its existence now to be doubted.

But is this movement made to provoke a veto, and thus render obnoxious and unpopular this provision of our Constitution? I hope it is not, and yet I fear it is; and therefore the pending Presidential election, in all of its consequences, opens before us. We cannot avoid the discussion if we would, and I would not if I could.

In November next, the people of this Republic will assemble at the ballot-box to select another Chief Magistrate of this Confederacy, for the four years ensuing the fourth of March next. That selection, we all admit, will have a decisive influence on the future policy of the Government. It is impossible, in the very nature of things, that it should be otherwise. Our Government is not the result of force, but of opinion. It is based, not in the fear and dread of power, but in the affections of the people. It is

maintained, not by large standing armies and powerful navies, but by the intelligence, virtue, and patriotism of the masses. In such a Government, and among such a people, individual men sink into insignificance, are of no consequence, and principle becomes every thing. Where there are eighteen to twenty millions of persons, all entitled to the same political rights and privileges, all having a like interest in a common country, it is absurd to suppose, that in their selection of men to discharge the duties of office for the common good and the general welfare, friendship for individuals, a disposition to honor a man irrespective of his fitness for station, or his capacity and experience, will control the action of the voter.

We have received from our fathers a Constitution as remarkable for its wisdom as for its adaptation to our necessities. It is the sheet-anchor of our hopes; and with one accord all parties cling to it as the ark of our political salvation. As to the proper policy to be pursued under this Constitution, so as to maintain the rights, advance the interest, and secure the common weal of all, parties have been formed and kept up ever since the days of Washington. They first arrayed themselves under two great leaders, Jefferson and Hamilton, both members of Washington's cabinet, both patriots, and both aiming at the same great end—the perpetuity and advancement of a common Government.

For one, sir, I do not believe this formation of parties has been deleterious to the prosperity of this great Republic; nor do I believe the future existence of parties in this country, formed under the Constitution, and based upon principle, to be an evil, nor that it can, by possibility, operate to our prejudice or disadvantage. The vigilance of the defeated party will ever secure industry, fidelity, and honesty in the officers placed in power by the successful party. The people compose the grand inquest of the nation, before which all must appear at stated and fixed periods; their virtue and their intelligence are our sure guaranties—where error is harmless, when truth is left free to combat it; their verdict is given through the ballot-box, and from their decision there lies no appeal.

But when parties degenerate into faction; when principle and policy are merged in a blind admiration of a great leader; when the blaze of military glory shall dazzle the eyes of the multitude; when “the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war” shall lead captive our people, and they shall be called upon to confer office upon a successful chieftain, “without a why or wherefore,”—then will a party, formed on such a basis, become the bane and curse of the nation; then will we begin that career which leads us, as it has led all other Republics which have preceded us, to inevitable overthrow and destruction.

Whenever the cry over the ballot-box shall be, “*aut Cæsar aut nihil*,” and it shall prevail, then is the destruction of our liberties nigh at hand. The people will require a ruler, and a Cæsar will be found. The watchword of the friends of Louis Napoleon, which has produced such consternation in France, and has been so much ridiculed in this country—“Am I not the nephew of mine uncle?”—will be as sensible as the cry raised in this country in behalf of one of the Presidential aspirants, Am I not a mighty man of valor? and none shall stand who opposes my triumph.

But the time is not yet; our Republic has not revolved around its cycle of greatness. The people will reject this appeal to their passions instead of their reason and judgment; and the result of the approaching election will, in my opinion, terminate in the dissolution of the Whig party; and the permanent establishment of Democratic principles.

Major General Zachary Taylor, now commanding the western division of the United States army, is the nominee of the National Whig Convention, and of course is the Whig candidate for the Presidency. For forty years he has been in command in the standing army of the United States; and for that period, having been set apart from the great body of the people, he has never exercised that greatest and highest privilege of a freeman, the right of suffrage; and has therefore taken no part in the struggles of our countrymen in maintaining sound principles, and in advocating and furthering those great measures which have contributed to our remarkable prosperity and rapid advancement in all the arts of peace. His action has not been associated with the great body of the people, nor has he manifested any sympathy with the masses.

General Taylor has been all the time in command, and has been accustomed to that absolute authority by which he saith to one man, "Come, and he cometh; and to another, Go, and he goeth." His will, not the wishes or interests of those around him, has been the law of his conduct. He has never occupied any other than a military position, which must have led him, from its very nature, to desire and favor a strong and arbitrary government, with the largest powers consolidated in the common centre. He has never held office under a sovereign State, and of course has never studied the nature of our complicated and well-balanced system of government, having a General Government, with defined, limited, delegated powers, and sovereign States, with reserved rights; nor has he familiarized himself with the thousand and one difficult and intricate questions arising out of our extended foreign relations, and the conflict of jurisdiction and of right springing up under the Constitution. He is a soldier, a lucky and fearless soldier, I admit; but still no less the mere soldier. He has no civic triumphs; he has originated or successfully advocated no great measure which has promoted the interest or secured the happiness of his country. He has been identified with no leading policy. Even the Mexican war, which has been conducted so brilliantly and terminated so successfully, in which he has gained all of his glory, does not meet his approbation, if his adherents are the true exponents of his views.

Again and again has he repeated, that in no case can he permit himself to be the candidate of any party, or yield himself to party schemes. He says, in his letter to Mr. Delony, of Louisiana, "that it is a right inherent in every freeman to possess himself of the political principles and opinions of those into whose hands the administration of the Government may be placed." Yet, in that very letter, when interrogated "as to the justice and necessity of this war with Mexico, on our part," he replies: "from my duties and the position I occupy, I do not consider it would be proper in me to give any opinion in regard to the same."

A Major General in the American army, engaged in an active and hazardous campaign against a foreign enemy, daily invoking Heaven to defend the right, and punish the wrong, feels a delicacy, deems it inexpedient, to give his opinion as to the justice of his country's cause! I challenge the history of warriors, from the beginning down to this instance, for a parallel case. A soldier, a Major General in command, daily and hourly risking his reputation voluntarily in the service, and yet cannot say whether there is any justice or necessity, on the part of his country, for all the calamities of war! So much from a candidate for the Presidency, who is to be elected because he is "the honest man;" leaving the inference, that he is the only honest man in the Republic.

In the same letter, when asked as to the necessity of a national bank, and as to the effects of a high protective tariff upon the country he replies :

"I am not prepared to answer them. I could only do so after duly investigating those subjects, which I cannot now do."

Here he inadvertently observed one of the great fundamental principles of elocution—when you know nothing, say nothing. This letter presents a strange compound: First, he asserts that every freeman has a right to know the opinions of candidates for office: Second, as to the justice of the war, he cannot give an opinion; as to bank and tariff, he has no opinion: Third, he "is no politician:" Fourth, if the people elect him Chief Magistrate, he will serve them; which all men accustomed to public life understand to mean, in plain parlance, I am a candidate, and would be pleased to be elected.

This letter was written June 9, 1847. Afterwards, August 3, 1847, he writes his celebrated letter to the Hon. J. R. Ingersoll, in which he avows himself "a Whig; not indeed an ultra partisan Whig, but a Whig in principle." Here he shows an astonishing improvement in political knowledge in a few weeks. But the sentence which follows, shows conclusively, to my mind, that this letter-writer, who assumed the name of Mr. Ingersoll, had misled and deceived General Taylor, and had thrown him into a passion. He adds :

"And after the discussion which occurred in both Houses of Congress, at the last session, growing out of the capitulation of Monterey—in which discussion you thought proper to defend my conduct in regard to that transaction, when assailed *somewhat, if not entirely, on party grounds*, in the House of which you are a member, for which you have my sincere thanks—which was done in such a way by those who disapproved that measure, I can hardly imagine how any one who was present, and heard the speeches on that occasion, or read them after they were published, could well mistake the complexion of my politics."

I take it for granted that General Taylor was imposed upon in this matter by some designing man. But I call upon gentlemen to mark this lucid passage. What is the idea conveyed in it—some Democrats, "on party grounds," had disapproved of the capitulation of Monterey? This was taking ground against him; and after that, no one that knew him "could mistake the complexion of his politics." Here the vindictive and intolerant spirit of a man long accustomed to command, unused to tolerate disobedience, and impatient of contradiction, manifests itself. But if this discussion made him a Whig, then I can say that Whigs are of easy manufacture. But when Gen. Taylor discovers the fact, that not a single Whig in the whole land is willing to defend the terms of that capitulation, on the grounds on which he placed it in his official report, which had been laid before Congress, by the same process of reasoning, "the complexion of his politics" will again become doubtful.

When that discussion took place, we had before us the official report; the capitulation and the correspondence which had passed between Gen. Taylor and Gen. Ampudia; and also the fact had been made known that the President had disapproved of the armistice, but the reasons for disapproval were not made known. Upon these papers and facts, members of Congress formed and expressed their opinions.

In order to a full understanding of this subject, let us recapitulate the facts. On the morning of the 19th of September, 1846, he encamped at the Walnut Springs, near Monterey, with an army less than seven thousand strong. On the morning of the 20th, the fighting began, which was continued for three days—21st, 22d, and 23d—with the most astounding courage and unexampled daring by our troops. There is not an American

citizen living who does not feel proud of his country when he reviews the good conduct of our army during those three memorable days. On the night of the 23d, at nine o'clock, Gen. Ampudia sent a message to Gen. Taylor, saying, "As I have made all the defence of which I believe this city capable," &c., "I propose to your Excellency to evacuate the city and citadel, taking with me the *personnel* and *materiel* of war which is left." On the next morning, at seven o'clock, Gen. Taylor replied: "In answer to your proposition to evacuate the city and fort, with all the *personnel* and *materiel* of war, I have to state that my duty compels me to decline acceding to it. A complete surrender of the town and garrison—the latter as prisoners of war—is now demanded."

On this day, Gen. Taylor said "he felt he had the city in his hands."

The result of the above correspondence was a personal interview between the Generals, the appointment of commissioners to arrange the terms of the capitulation, and the agreement that the Mexican army should retain their arms, with twenty-one rounds of ammunition, march out of the city with the honors of war, and that there should be an armistice of eight weeks' duration. This was a great falling off from the first demand.

And what were the reasons assigned for this utter sacrifice of advantages so great and so dearly bought? Not that "every military man must admit, who has seen the ground, it was impossible to invest Monterey so closely as to prevent the escape of the garrison;" not "the consideration of humanity was present in my mind during the conference which led to the convention, and outweighed, in my judgment, the doubtful advantages to be gained by the resumption of the attack upon the town;" not "at the date of the surrender of Monterey, our force had not more than ten days' rations."

These reasons were after-thoughts, urged upon a re-argument of the case. These were military reasons, and none are so good judges of their soundness as military men.

But be it ever remembered and kept in mind, that the only reasons laid before Congress were contained in General Taylor's official report, in these words:

"It will be seen that the terms granted the Mexican garrison are less rigorous than those first imposed. *The gallant defence of the town, and the fact of a recent change of Government in Mexico, believed to be favorable to the interests of peace,* induced me to concur with the commission in their terms, which will, I trust, receive the approval of the Government. *The latter consideration also prompted the convention for a temporary suspension of hostilities.* Though scarcely warranted by my instructions, yet the change of affairs since those instructions were issued, seemed to warrant this course. I beg to be advised as early as practicable whether I have met the views of the Government in these particulars."

Here is the whole argument in behalf of the terms of the capitulation, by which an entire hostile army was released, and an eight weeks' cessation of hostilities conceded to them.

Mr. BARROW here interposed, and said that he understood the gentleman from Mississippi to say that not a single Whig was willing to defend the capitulation. Now, he would say he was ready to defend that capitulation, and had always done so.

Mr. THOMPSON continued. The gentleman from Tennessee is not exactly correct. I do not, nor have I said that there is no one found to defend the capitulation. I know to the contrary. But I have yet to find the man who defends the terms of the capitulation, for the reasons furnished in Gen. Taylor's official report, and particularly that portion of the capitulation which ever gave rise to any discussion—the armistice. The sole reason

for that was, the supposed change in the Government, believed to be favorable to the interests of peace. Will any one now defend that part of the capitulation? I insist that those who abandon the reasons here given for the terms granted the Mexican garrison, are themselves the censurers of General Taylor. They accuse him of an effort to palm upon the country, as a glorious victory, an indecisive battle.

General Taylor insists, in the only report which was then known to Congress, that these favorable terms were granted *ex gratia*, not *ex necessitate*; speaking as he said he felt, that "he had the city in his hands." But the "gallant defence" the Mexicans had made of the city had won upon his generosity; and "the fact of a recent change of Government in Mexico, believed to be favorable to the interests of peace," had misled him, and caused him to think it unnecessary to insist upon rigorous terms. It even led him to an agreement to suspend hostilities for eight weeks, in order that all the anticipated advantages of this change might be realized.

The change here referred to was the return of Santa Anna from banishment, to take command of the Mexican army. This fact, this return of Santa Anna, was the basis upon which General Ampudia practised his deception upon General Taylor, and humbugged him into an acceptance of his own terms. That General Taylor was unconsciously deceived and taken in by the Mexican General, I do not question; but still he was taken in by the stratagem; still, Ampudia had told him a falsehood, a downright and, to us, palpable falsehood; and General Taylor shows by his report he believed the story, and acted on the falsehood as a fact. I have always regarded this as a trick of war, and this trick for the time answered Ampudia's purpose.

It is asserted that Santa Anna tricked the President of the United States, and secured from him a pass into Vera Cruz, on the ground that the fact of his return would produce a change in the Mexican Government "favorable to the interests of peace;" and from General Taylor's own statement, it is evident that the fact of the return of Santa Anna had produced a change in the Government which he "believed to be favorable to the interests of peace," and on this belief he acted. I am not surprised that General Taylor was deceived; but I am surprised that the friends of a man who boastingly say, "Oh, he shrinks from no responsibility," should endeavor to deny the fact, when he admits it himself, and to vindicate his course, for reasons never furnished till the enemy was gone, and he had discovered the stratagem.

It must be observed that General Taylor, in making his return of this transaction, does not raise any military question. He does not say, as he afterwards alleges, that "it was impossible to invest Monterey so closely as to prevent the escape of the garrison;" "the consideration of humanity was ever present in his mind;" "that his force had not more than ten days' rations." These may have been his actual reasons; but it was a misfortune, and a great omission, not to have given them at first to the Department and to the Government. Those reasons would have confined the discussion of this subject to men whose profession is arms. But when he decides every military question by having it understood that the city was in his hands, and that a sound and wholesome policy dictated the lenient terms to the garrison, and the armistice, he must have known he was entering a field where every politician felt himself his equal; in the same light as every juror feels himself equal to a judge in finding the facts of a case, after the law of the case has been expounded and decided.

At the time of the discussion to which General Taylor alludes, as giving an unmistakeable complexion to his politics, it was known that the reasons furnished by General Taylor were not satisfactory to the President, and that a discontinuance of the armistice had been ordered. It then soon became apparent that the popularity of this military chieftain was to be brought into the canvass, for the purpose of effecting political objects. The most ruthless and violent assaults were made upon the Administration. General Taylor was supposed to be immeasurably strong with the people, and that chord was to be played upon. The President, who had conferred honor after honor upon General Taylor, till his brow was freighted with military laurels, was charged with a design to disgrace and destroy him before the people. The attacks upon the Administration, though groundless, were kept up with briskness and spirit.

On the 30th of January, 1847, after two-thirds of the short session had passed away, and after many members had expressed their disapproval of the armistice, the celebrated joint resolutions of thanks to General Taylor were brought forward. The rules of the House were suspended, (myself voting in the affirmative,) and the battle of Monterey was denominated "a most brilliant victory." That expression met my concurrence. And it "reflected imperishable honor upon our arms;" in that I concurred. But these facts made the more apparent to me the conclusions to which my mind had previously arrived, that the stratagem of Ampudia had robbed our army of the fruits, the legitimate fruits, of a hard-fought battle and dearly-bought victory.

But while I was willing to applaud the fighting at Monterey, I was not willing to give a vote which excluded me from the opinion I had previously expressed as to the terms of the capitulation. It was here I had the honor to propose the proviso which had drawn down upon me much unnecessary and unjust remark: "*Provided*, That nothing herein contained shall be construed into an approbation of the terms of the capitulation." It was accepted by Mr. FARAN, of Ohio, as a part of his amendment, which declared the war in which we were engaged to be a just and necessary war. The previous question was immediately moved and sustained. Mr. Leake, then a member from Virginia, rose and requested me to insert after "approbation," the words "or disapprobation." Immediately I arose and asked permission to do so; not because, as I said, I deemed it necessary, for that was the meaning of the proviso as it stood; but to prevent any misconstruction of the purpose, as it was intended to withhold any expression of opinion on the subject of that negotiation. The amendment could only be made by universal consent, and that was refused by the Opposition. The vote was taken, and the resolution, as amended, adopted. In the excitement of the moment, a motion was made to strike out of the title "thanks," and insert "censure." The ayes and noes were called, and but one man had the nerve to vote in the affirmative. The mover of the amendment himself dodged the vote, and could not be brought to enter of record a vote so much against good conscience.

Such is a concise history of this celebrated proviso, out of which so great a humbug has been attempted; and I now declare that, under the same circumstances, with the same state of facts, I would again pursue the same course. What was done was not unjust to General Taylor, because he acknowledged, by clear implication, in his report, that he had been humbugged by General Ampudia. The facts did not exist upon which he based his action. He made the armistice because "of the fact of a recent

change in the Mexican Government, believed to be favorable to the interests of peace." But when he ascertained that this change, instead of being favorable to peace, was adverse to peace, every candid man would think he would have been against the armistice.

Immediately after these joint resolutions passed, in which Congress had withheld any expression of opinion as to the terms of the capitulation, I had the honor to offer a resolution, calling for all the correspondence between the Department and General Taylor; which was adopted. In this correspondence I found the letter of the Secretary of War, in which he gives his reasons for a disapproval of the armistice, so fully, so ably, and, to my mind, so satisfactorily, that I will read it :

" WAR DEPARTMENT, *Washington, October 13, 1846.*

" SIR: Your communications of the 22d, 23d, and 25th ultimo, detailing operations of the army under your immediate command at Monterey, have been received. The skill, courage, and gallant conduct displayed on that occasion by the troops under your command, both regulars and volunteers, have added glory to our arms, and merit from the Government and people of the United States the warmest expressions of gratitude and praise.

" In relation to the terms of the capitulation of Monterey, the President instructs me to say, that he regrets it was not deemed advisable to insist upon the terms which you had first proposed. The circumstances which dictated, doubtless justified the change. The President, uninformed of these circumstances, does not know in what degree the recent change in the Government of Mexico may have contributed to this result. Certain it is, however, that the present rulers of that Republic have not yet given any evidence that they are 'favorable to the interests of peace.' Of this you will already have been informed by my despatch of the 22d ultimo.

" The Government did not contemplate, as you will perceive by the tenor of the despatches from this department, that there would probably happen any contingency, in the prosecution of the war, in which it would be expedient to suspend hostilities before the offer of acceptable terms of peace.

" In my despatch of the 22d ultimo, which had not reached you when you entered into the arrangement with General Ampudia on the 25th ultimo, there are considerations and facts stated which render the continuance of the armistice extremely embarrassing. As the offer recently made by the United States to open negotiations for a peace was not acceded to by the present rulers of Mexico, but reserved to be submitted to and acted on by a Congress to be assembled on the 6th of December next, it was deemed by the Government here highly important that the war in the mean time should be prosecuted with the utmost vigor, to the end that they might be made sensible of the evils of its continuance, and thereby become more inclined to bring it to a speedy close. In pursuance of this policy, an expedition was proposed, in my despatch of the 22d ultimo, for the purpose of taking possession of the entire department of Tamaulipas; and, under the belief that it would not interfere with your plans and operations, no doubt was entertained that it would receive your concurrence and support. In anticipation thereof, measures have been already taken to carry it out at the earliest practicable period.

" By the arrangement you have made for a temporary suspension of hostilities within certain limits of the enemy's country, if continued to the end of the time stipulated, a considerable part of Tamaulipas will be exempted from military operations until within a few days of the time fixed for the meeting of the Mexican Congress, and the expedition thereby delayed, or, if prosecuted by the land or naval forces, might bring into question the good faith of the United States.

" In the despatch before referred to, you will perceive that an attack by our naval force upon some places on the coast of Tamaulipas is also contemplated. Whatever may be the advantage or the necessity of the coöperation of a land force, it must be withheld until near the close of November, if the armistice is continued to the end of the stipulated period.

" The Government is fully persuaded that if you had been aware of the special reasons disclosed in the despatch of the 22d ultimo, and the intentions of the Government still entertained, you would not have acceded to the suspension of hostilities for even the limited period specified in the articles of capitulation; but as its continuance depends upon the orders of your Government, you are instructed to give the requisite notice that the armistice is to close at once, and that each party is at liberty to resume and prosecute hostilities without restriction."

If the approval of this letter and its reasoning is a censure upon General Taylor, then I, in common with the Secretary of the War, do censure him. The world know, according to the statement of General Taylor himself, that he was deceived, and the world have independence enough to speak out their sentiments. It is base treason to our institutions to resign our right of thought and speech. Members on this floor do not blush to pronounce the President of the United States, the commander-in-

chief of our army and navy, a traitor, usurper ; Polk, the mendacious ; an administration of "dwarfish talents and gigantic vices;" to falsely denounce General Cass, the candidate of the Democratic party for the Presidency, as fraudulently obtaining money from the public treasury, whose whole life has been spent in a zealous, honorable, and faithful discharge of the public service ; as the hero of Hull's surrender—thus implying that he is a coward, when the history of his whole life shows that he has been equal to every emergency of the service in which he has been placed. And is General Taylor, the candidate of the Whig party, above all criticism ? Why, in the opinion of some men—

———"he doth bestride the narrow world,
Like a Colossus : and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
To find ourselves dishonorable graves."

When Pompey the Great had overrun Sicily, driven out Perpenna, and taken possession of the cities, the Mamertines, a class of citizens living in Messina, when summoned, refused to appear before his tribunal or acknowledge his jurisdiction, claiming exemption by an ancient privilege received from the Romans. Pompey's answer was significant, and illustrative of the present efforts to frown down all inquiry into the course pursued by a victorious general. He said, "Will you never have done with citing privileges to men *who wear swords*?"

On the return of this same distinguished general from a brilliant campaign in Africa, he demanded a triumph. The Roman Senate at first refused, on the ground that the laws did not allow that honor to any person who had not been either a consul or a prætor ; he persisted, and on that occasion used that celebrated expression to Sylla, that "more worshipped the rising than the setting sun." The Senate was humbled, granted the triumph, and Pompey lived to see the whole power and dignity of the Senate swept away by another and more successful chieftain.

I do not believe the day has arrived in this Republic when the people will do otherwise than applaud a member of Congress who dares to do his duty, and firmly maintains the right. For myself, I would regard it the proudest hour of my life to be the author of a sentiment which fell from Mr. Clay on a trying occasion to him : "I would," said he, "rather be right, than be President of the United States."

I have lately seen, by mere accident, "A sketch of the Life and Public Services of General Zachary Taylor, published by order of the executive committee of the Whigs in Congress," written for distribution, in which I find some gross slanders upon the members of the last Congress, and unblushing falsehoods as to myself. I do not object to all the glorifications of General Taylor ; his friends are at liberty to impose him upon this country as greater than Alexander, or Cæsar, or Charles the Fifth, or Charles the Twelfth, or Napoleon. Even though they might establish his title to outrank the mightiest warriors that have ever lived, yet my mind would require something more to show his fitness for the Chief Magistracy of this Union. But when my humble name is disparagingly introduced, or that of those with whom I have been associated in action, I will vindicate the truth of history without misgiving, without hesitancy.

First, then, as to the history of the Lieutenant General. Some time in the month of November, in the year 1846, General Scott was ordered to take the chief command of our army in Mexico ; and when in obedience to that order, General Scott arrived in Mexico and took command of our army,

General Taylor was neither "dismissed nor disgraced." If that weret rue, it would then appear that this country belonged to General Taylor, not General Taylor to the country.

On the 25th of December, 1846, the President urged upon Congress the raising of ten additional regiments, and recommended the passage of a law for the appointment of "a general officer to take command of all our military forces in the field." This officer, Congress proposed to call a Lieutenant General. I favored the passage of such a law. And if awar should break out to-morrow, and the President, the commander in-chief, should ask for the privilege of assigning to the chief command any general officer irrespective of the date of his commission, I would vote for it with cheerfulness, and would consider myself most unjust to hold the President responsible for the good and efficient prosecution of a campaign, and yet deny to him the privilege of selecting the agent to carry out his views and his plan of operation. I advocated it because it was right in itself—right in the abstract—right regardless of any man; and I have no doubt, when the occasion for humbugging with the generals of this war shall have passed away, such will be the general opinion of all parties. In the case of the recommendation above referred to, if any one had a right to complain, it was Scott. General Taylor could not have been affected, because he had then a separate and distinct command, and no one acquainted with the facts can suppose the intention or expectation was to interfere with Taylor's separate command. Every general officer engaged in the main invading column would have had more justification for complaint than Taylor. Worth, Twiggs, Butler, Patterson, Quitman, Pillow, might have been affected by the appointment of a Lieutenant General, but General Taylor's position would have remained the same, having his separate command, and reporting directly to the Department at Washington. The same was true as regards General Kearney. How ineffably contemptible, then, is the effort of this writer of the life of General Taylor, by this "foul, shameless," sweeping charge upon the members of the last Congress, to make capital for him, and to arouse in the minds of the people a feeling that he had been unjustly dealt by and persecuted!

After detailing all the votes on the subject of the Lieutenant General, he says that "the motive for this foul, shameless, and persevering attempt," was "to dismiss, humiliate, and disgrace General Taylor." Again: "Monstrous as this proposition was in infamy and injustice, although the President's supporters in the House of Representatives treated it in the beginning with open contempt, they were finally brought, by the force of party drill and Executive patronage, to regard it as of singular merit and necessity." Here is another instance of the manner in which the effort is to be made to elevate General Taylor into the Presidential chair.

This sentence, sir, falsifies history, and renders the author contemptible, by charging a majority of the last Congress of being influenced in their conduct by corrupt means. When the message from the President of the United States recommending the appointment of the Lieutenant General was received, it was referred to the Committee on Military Affairs. Soon afterwards that committee made a report, asking to be discharged from the further consideration of the subject, and moved to lay the message on the table. This motion was adopted without attracting any attention. A motion was made by Mr. HAMLIN, of Maine, to reconsider; and on the next day the vote laying the message on the table was reconsidered—yeas 86, nays 84. The question then recurred on discharging the committee from

its further consideration, and laying so much of the message as related to the same upon the table, and failed—yeas 93, nays 97. A motion was then made to refer the message to the Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, and carried without a division.—(House Journal 134, 137, 138, 139, 2d session 29th Congress.) Thus the Journal falsifies the charge that “The President’s supporters in the House of Representatives treated it in the beginning with open contempt.”

Again : This veritable biographer says that “the members of that Congress were finally brought, by *the force of party drill and Executive patronage*, to regard” this measure “as of singular merit and necessity.” In the next sentence, my own name is introduced as connected with this measure ; therefore, I suppose reference is made to me in part. Now, for myself, I pronounce the imputation false and infamous.

This truthful and faithful historian again proceeds : “A Lieutenant General to displace him (General Taylor) did not seem likely to succeed, and hence it was determined to censure him by a formal vote of Congress. Here, too, the conspirators failed.” After referring to the resolution of thanks as introduced by Mr. СОСКЕ, he proceeds : “This resolution was unexceptionable, and opposition to its passage came as unexpected as it was unjustifiable. It happened, however, that partisan violence was baser than it was accredited ; and while there was one man so steeped in prejudice as to offer, there were more than a hundred to vote for the amendment to which we refer. That amendment was the handiwork of Mr. JACOB THOMPSON, of Mississippi.”

Here is another specimen of the manner in which popularity is sought to be obtained for the Whig candidate for the Presidency, in holding him up as a persecuted man ; and in order to raise General Taylor, it is deemed necessary to rob others of their fair name. It is said General Taylor has no enemies to punish, should he be elected President of the United States. But here this biographer undertakes to point out the “conspirators” who had determined to disgrace him, and whose sins in this respect demand condign punishment. This is the way, I suppose, for a no-party man to conciliate and harmonize all parties.

Now, sir, if to withhold my approbation of that portion of the capitulation which gave the enemy eight weeks to recover his strength, and with new vigor to resume the fight, when that enemy was supposed to be in the “hollow of the hand” of our General, be a censure of General Taylor, then I do censure. If to say I believe that General Taylor entered into that capitulation, by which the operations of our army in Mexico were suspended for eight weeks, when their active services were deemed important, because of “the fact of a recent change of government in Mexico, believed to be favorable to the interests of peace,” and that in that fact he was deceived and humbugged, be a censure upon General Taylor, then I do censure, having before me Gen. Taylor’s own report—given of course upon honor—to prove the fact. If to say I approve of Mr. Marcy’s letter, which ordered the discountenance of that armistice, one of the terms of that capitulation, be a censure upon General Taylor, then I say I do approve it, and consequently do censure.

But, sir, those who seek to construe the proviso which I had the honor to offer to the resolutions of thanks, into a censure, into an insult to General Taylor, are themselves his greatest enemies, and do him a great injustice ; because the authors and supporters of the measure disavowed such an intention at the time, and gave, by their votes on the motion to strike

out thanks and insert censure, a cotemporaneous exposition of this proposition; because all the world know, that even if error existed and wrong views had been formed by the members of Congress, General Taylor, by his imperfect and unsatisfactory report, had required Congress to stultify themselves or come to that conclusion; because they insist that the Representatives of the American people have, by that construction, pronounced that here General Taylor committed an egregious blunder, and that judgment stands unreversed; because, by attracting public attention to this matter, instead of making capital for the Whig candidate for the Presidency, it will necessarily produce an opposite effect.

During this session, joint resolutions of thanks to General Taylor for the victory achieved at Buena Vista were introduced into this House; and upon motion made by one of his political friends, (Mr. ASHMUN, of Massachusetts,) there was appended to the resolutions an amendment, that the victory was won in a war "unconstitutionally and unnecessarily commenced by the President of the United States!" Did this convey a censure upon General Taylor? It was not so intended by his friends: yet I think this military chieftain would have felt his cheeks tinge with shame to have read them; for if the war was unnecessary and unconstitutional in its commencement it was equally unnecessary and unconstitutional in its prosecution; and the war being of this character, he (Gen. Taylor) was the leader of a licensed band of murderers and highwaymen, who had been engaged in the unholy work of shedding innocent blood. He was but a successful buccaneer, or land pirate, skilled in the art of destroying those who had the manliness to stand up and defend their homes, their wives and children. Such honors, though they had been piled up mountain high, won in such a cause, would have paled, dwindled, died before the eternal principles of justice, and right, and truth. Such a resolution, coupled with such a sentiment, would, in my estimation, have dishonored the man and the brave soldiers who had won the victory; and the day will come when all of our countrymen will so esteem it.

If General Taylor be the man I have taken him to be, he would have sworn in anger, for another reason. He was more intimately associated with the commencement of this war with Mexico than any man living. He advised the movement of our army to the borders of the Rio Grande. He, of his own free will and discretion, pitched his tent opposite Matamoros, and pointed his guns so as to bear upon the main plaza of that town. If his small force invited the attack, he was responsible for its weakness, because he had full authority to enlarge it at any time. When all these things flashed across his mind, could he have regarded the resolutions other than a direct personal reflection? If he did not so feel, he is not the man he boasts himself to be, "who asks no favors, and shrinks from no responsibility."

But in the language of this truthful historian, I cannot say that those who voted for the motion had determined to censure General Taylor, or to mock him, or that they were conspirators, or that they acted from *base*, vindictive, party motives. I am more charitable, and suppose they acted with a due but a mistaken sense of their responsibility to God and their country; and as I know I acted from correct motives, I pronounce the charge of "a determination to censure," *false*; of being a "conspirator," *infamously false*; and of acting from "base, vindictive, party motives," *superlatively false*.

General Taylor is a candidate for the Presidency; his military character is not in the issue. I am willing to concede to him all that sort of merit

which his extravagant friends may claim for him. I think he possesses ample military knowledge to answer the purposes of a Chief Magistrate; but I shall oppose his election with zeal and industry, with all the talent and all the influence which I can command; and in doing so, I shall act with a consciousness that I am serving my country and its best interests, preserving and advancing our prosperity, and perpetuating our liberty and our glorious institutions. I shall do so, because I do not believe he possesses the requisite political information and experience. The able civilian and distinguished general are not necessarily blended in the same individual. A man may be an excellent pilot to a steamboat, and yet know nothing of the steam-engine which propels his vessel. A man may be an accomplished mathematician, and yet be wholly unable to construct a house.

It is no reflection upon General Taylor to say he knows nothing of the civil affairs of Government, because he has lived till he is three-score and five years old without forming and expressing an opinion on those great measures which have divided the people, and which, being carried out, have borne this Government upward and onward to our present proud eminence of prosperity and greatness—an eminence from which we hold out the beacon light which invites, and guides, and cheers the downtrodden of all the earth into the paths of liberty and republicanism. In this vacancy of mind, he boldly takes his position, flat-footed, upon the milldam, and says: What a majority of these censorious Congress shall think, I will think. But unfortunately for this position, if he be elected President, the Constitution will require him to think first. The third section of the second article of the Constitution provides: "He [the President] shall, from time to time, give to the Congress information of the state of the Union, and recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient." Our forefathers were silly enough to suppose the people would have the sense and independence to select a thinking man for President—a man with some political principles; and as they had constructed a house for his residence, and required him to be always at his post, it was presumed, as the representative of the whole people, he would see what the true interests of the country required, and therefore they made it his duty to collect and lay before Congress all proper information, to enable them to legislate for the people of the Union, and recommend the adoption of such measures as he might judge *necessary and expedient*.

From the political opinions which have been given out to the country, what kind of a message would General Taylor send to Congress? In the language of the gentleman from New Jersey, (Mr. VAN DYKE,) "Echo answers, 'I don't know.'" (A laugh.) If I should judge from the staple of the speeches of his friends in his behalf before the people, it would run something after this fashion: "'I hold no opinion which I would not readily proclaim to my assembled countrymen; but crude impressions upon matters of policy which may be right to day and wrong to morrow, are perhaps not the best test for fitness for office. One who cannot be trusted without pledges, (*i. e.* without opinions,) cannot be confided in merely on account of them.' General Taylor never surrenders. General Taylor asks no favors and shrinks from no responsibility. General Taylor eats fat meat on a piece of cold corn bread, and cuts it with a Barlow knife, as Mr. Crittenden says. A little more grape, Captain Bragg! Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, Monterey, and Buena Vista!" (A laugh.)

One of the cardinal articles of faith taught now in the new edition of the Whig catechism, is, that "General Taylor never surrenders." His

military history proves this to be true; but when you consider General Taylor as a politician, it has no foundation in fact. He has repeatedly asserted that—

"In no case can I permit myself to be the candidate of any party, or yield myself to party schemes." "I shall offer no active opposition to the use of my name in connection with this responsible office, (the Chief Magistracy,) as long as they continue to use it thus, independent of party distinctions." "But, in being thus nominated, I must insist on the condition—and my position on this point is immutable—that I shall not be brought forward by them as the candidate of their party, or considered as the exponent of their party doctrines." "I do not design to withdraw my name if Mr. Clay be the nominee of the Whig National Convention." * * * "It has not been my intention, at any moment, to change my position, or to withdraw my name from the canvass, whoever may be the nominee of the National Convention, either of the Whig or Democratic party."

Look on this picture. Now, on this: the Convention which convened in Philadelphia, in June last, was undoubtedly a party assemblage, composed of Whigs, and Whigs only. The object of the meeting was to select a standard-bearer of their party, and a great representative of their party faith. General Taylor appears before that Convention, and, through the delegates from his own State, solicits the nomination; and, in order to obtain it, authorizes them to make the following statements:

"On behalf of the delegation of Louisiana, I will further state, that General Taylor desires it to be understood, that, in his opinion, his friends who come into this Convention are bound to abide by its decision, and to sustain the nominee 'heart and soul'; that General Taylor recognizes in his friends in this Convention those who have the right to withdraw his name, and will cheerfully acquiesce in such withdrawal."

"General Taylor, we are also authorized to say, will hail with entire satisfaction the nomination by the Convention of any other than himself; *being persuaded that the welfare of our country requires a change of men and measures, in order to arrest the downward tendency of our national affairs.*"

Here is a complete, absolute, unconditional surrender. Alas, poor human nature! As the Psalmist says, "there is none perfect; no, not one." Long had General Taylor resisted every approach manfully and boldly, maintaining his independence of both parties; indignantly scouting the very idea of becoming the instrument, the tool of any set of men, to effect their party schemes. He said, in effect, "Is thy servant a dog that he shall do this thing?" And yet, how is it? This chieftain, who had put Arista and his hosts to flight, who forced Ampudia to beg for quarters, and had scattered the mighty legions of Santa Anna, bows himself, and makes an unconditional surrender of himself and his conscience to King Caucus. To his puissant majesty he says: "You believe 'the welfare of our country requires a change of men and measures, in order to avert the downward tendency of our national affairs:' so do I. Now, make me your captain, and the men are changed, and the measures shall be. These Locofocos, who have been fattening out of the public crib, shall be beheaded, and true and loyal subjects of your highness shall be provided for. This abominable Democratic tariff of 1846, which is depriving so many of your faithful friends, the manufacturers, of the rightful profits upon their capital, and under which our sugar planters cannot make more than twice as much as the cotton growers, with the same labor, must be changed, to avert the downward tendency of the country. This independent treasury, which I always thought was a kind of a two-legged treasury, is keeping your most reliable supporters, the banks, out of the rich shavings they could make by the use of the public money; it must be stricken from the statute-book. It is true, O King Caucus, when I was vexed with Mr. Marcy, I said that this Government ought to take six or seven States from Mexico, and hold them; but since I see that the Locofoco candidate, General Cass, thinks

this country might swallow the whole of Mexico and not be materially damaged, he has so far outdone me, I take that back, and say, in the language of the great Washington: 'Why should we quit our own, to stand on foreign ground?' And therefore, like you, O King Caucus, I am for taking no land at all."

Now, General Taylor had not the face, in view of all he had said, to make this speech in proper person, but he appointed commissioners to do so, and when it was done, King Caucus took the whole matter under advisement: "Mr. Clay is a great man, and a man of principle, but, unfortunately, his principles are too well known. If we risk a battle under that leader, his whereabouts is so well known we shall surely be vanquished, and all of our hopes of office will fail. But General Taylor is not openly committed. When asked, What are his principles? we can reply, Did he not fight for his country! When charged with giving aid and comfort to the enemy, we can say: Yes, Old Zack did give them aid and comfort with a vengeance! When asked, What measure will he recommend? we can answer: A little more grape, Captain Bragg! Thus we can effect by indirection, what we cannot do directly. As we have forced him to surrender before he starts, it is very certain we can guide him after the reins of power are placed in his hands." And thus King Caucus decreed General Taylor should be the captain.

I shall oppose the election of Gen. Taylor, because, having never declared his principles, his supposed availability is based upon the hypothesis, that the people, unable to detect the game of deception by which no principles are made to fit every man's principles, will be influenced in their action solely by an admiration for military exploits. I humbly conceive an appeal is made to the passions, and not to the understanding of the voters. An election carried by such influences, degrades our countrymen, and reflects dishonor upon our free republican institutions.

I shall oppose the election of Gen. Taylor, because he belongs to the standing army; that branch of the service from which have proceeded those men who have overturned all preceding republics, and were so much dreaded by our ancestors. He now wears his epaulettes upon his shoulders, and girds a sword to his side, and is, at this moment, in command of a strong force, subject to his order. I have no objection to men who have won military distinction—such a man as Washington was, or Jackson, or Harrison. But these men were taken from private life, at the time they were run for the Presidency; they had no banded legions to make their elevation dangerous to liberty.

After Washington had evinced military talent in the Indian wars, while yet a young man he returned to private life, and there remained for seventeen years, till he was sent by his own State to the first Congress which assembled in the United States, before they were yet independent. While a member of Congress, he was elected commander-in-chief of the American army; he remained in command only so long as the war lasted, and then resigned his commission and retired to private life, where he remained until he was elected a delegate to the Convention which formed the Federal Constitution. Of that body he was the President, and, therefore, had as much civil as military experience when he was elected the first President after the adoption of the present Constitution. He was first in peace as well as first in war. He was a citizen soldier; and great as was his worth and purity, I do not believe our jealous forefathers would have called him to the Presidential chair with a sword in his hand.

Jackson, too, was a citizen-soldier. When war's alarms aroused the patriotism of the country, he threw aside his law books, and shouldered his musket. The peace of his country having been won, again he resumed the duties of his profession; he had been lawyer, judge, Senator of the United States, member of the convention which formed the constitution of the State of Tennessee, and Governor of a Territory, and his civil experience had been far greater than his military.

Harrison had been, at an early day, connected with the army of the United States; but he remained in the army but a short time: he had been Governor of a Territory, delegate to Congress, Senator of the United States, negotiator of many Indian treaties, Minister at a foreign court, and, finally, clerk of the court of common pleas in Ohio. He was a civilian; in the opinion of his friends, an orator, a classical scholar, an elegant writer; but he, too, was a citizen-soldier.

General Cass is also a citizen-soldier; he has been United States marshal. When the wild blast of war swept over the Northwest, he abandoned his private business, and volunteered to fight the battles of his country; and after good service, and after he had been promoted to the office of Brigadier General by Mr. Madison, he was appointed and served with distinguished ability as Governor of a Territory, as negotiator of many important Indian treaties, accompanied with great hazard, as Secretary of War, as minister at a foreign court, and, finally, Senator of the United States, where his nomination found him, and he immediately retired to private life.

General Taylor, however, has no experience but in arms, and he is the first man in the whole history of the Government, without any civil experience, who has aspired to the highest civil office in the world. Others may do as they will, but as for me and mine, we will resist this untried experiment.

If I had another hour, I would proceed with these reasons, because they could be greatly multiplied; but I discover the sands of my hour are fast wasting away.

When I cast my eye over the map of the world, and compare our happy country with the benighted condition of uncivilized nations, and the troubled State of civilized Europe, I feel proud of that bright flag which floats from the dome of your capitol, and under whose protection we sit and deliberate in safety. It is associated with every high and lofty feeling—with all that elevates, adorns, ennobles, and dignifies man. It is emblematical of the onward and upward progress of our great Confederacy. It sheds its light and power over "the land of the free and the home of the brave." It spreads its ample folds from ocean to ocean. Under it, our ships plough every sea, and our commerce reaches to every port. Under it, but lately, our army has marched in triumph, from victory to victory, until it proudly waved from the lofty capital of Mexico. An expensive war has been waged until we have conquered a glorious peace, without deranging the business operations of the country, and without a single financial panic. All the arts of peace have been advanced, and become more perfect and useful. Improvements in our internal communication have kept up their onward progress; railroads have lengthened out their serpentine tracks, and grappled and cemented the bonds of our Union. Lightning flashes along our telegraphic wires, and friends a thousand miles apart hold converse with each other, as though face to face. Our people are contended, thriving, industrious, cheerful, prosperous, and happy.

What were the great measures which stimulated and secured this result? The wise, just, equal tariff of 1846, and the abandonment of the banking system, and the return to a constitutional currency, and the preservation of the integrity of the rights of the States, by abstaining from the exercise of any power not clearly conferred by the Constitution.

Under such circumstances, the people ask for no change. The people want no change of measures; they do not believe, with General Taylor, "a change of men and measures necessary to arrest the downward tendency of our national affairs." They will maintain the ascendancy of those measures, for the establishment of which they have so long struggled; and the ides of November will prove their attachment to those men who have been so faithful and efficient in carrying out their high behests. It is impossible they should build up so splendid an edifice, and, immediately after entering into the full enjoyment of the fruits of their labor, they should turn, and, with ruthless hands, raze this magnificent structure to the ground. Mobs may be fickle; but my confidence is unwavering, that intelligent freemen will stand firm, unflinching, and unmoved; and the result of the pending election will eventuate to the honor, glory, and perpetuity of our institutions.